

Corporation for National and Community Service

2010 Social Innovation Fund

REDF

Reviewer Comments – Phase 2

SOCIAL INNOVATION FUND 2010 EVALUATION CONSENSUS FORM

Instructions throughout this form are indicated in red.

Before you begin, please fill out the Applicant Name and Application ID# in the above header. This Evaluation Consensus Form (ECF) is where each panel records its consensus assessment of an application. The completion of this form may be led by any panelist; that individual will be designated the Lead Reviewer (LR). All Reviewers are expected to serve as the LR on at least two applications. **The evaluation consensus assessment should be based on the panel's examination of only the subcategories highlighted in red in the chart below, not the full application. In addition, Evaluation Reviewers should only assess how well applicants responded to the specific evidence-based criteria within the subcategories highlighted in yellow in this form.**

Category	Percentage	Subcategories
Program Design	45%	A. Goals and Objectives B. Use of Evidence C. Community Resources D. Description of Activities i. Subgranting ii. Technical Assistance and Support
Organizational Capacity	35%	A. Ability to Provide Program Oversight B. Ability to Provide Fiscal Oversight
Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy	20%	A. Budget and Program Design B. Match Sources

Panels will utilize Panel Consensus Calls to discuss each application and come to agreement on the content of the Narrative Assessment for each category, the Rating for each category, the Overall Appraisal Statement and the Band in which the application will be placed. When completing this form, the LR should rely on four primary documents: 1) the application being reviewed; 2) the SIF Review Notes page from each panelist; 3) the SIF Notice of Federal Funds Availability (NOFA); 4) the Consensus Rubric at the end of this form.

Please complete the following steps:

1. For each of the 3 categories the LR should:
 - a. **Write a 3 – 5 sentence Narrative Assessment** reflecting the panel's assessment of the quality of the response in the category being assessed; it is important that this narrative include brief summary information, but more importantly, the panel's evaluation of the application's quality.
 - b. **List the application's significant strengths and weaknesses and annotate each.** Each significant strength or weakness **must** be supported by **at least one** of the Eligibility or Application Review Criteria that were in the SIF NOFA. (criteria are included in this form)
 - c. **Taking into consideration** both the Narrative Assessment and the listed strengths and weaknesses, **select a category Rating** by checking the appropriate box.
2. **Complete the Overall Appraisal section.** In this section, you will:
 - a. Provide an Overall Appraisal Statement; and
 - b. Select a Consensus Band that represents the quality of the application as a whole. The Bands are described in the Overall Appraisal section at the end of this form.

PROGRAM DESIGN (45%)

The Social Innovation Fund Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) states that the following will be considered when reviewing an applicant's Program Design.

A. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Corporation asks applicants to use a thematic approach in describing their proposed investments in community organizations. As established in the Act, there are two basic operational models of SIF intermediaries. The first is a SIF that will operate in a single geographic location, and address one or more priority issues within that location. This model is referred to as a "geographically-based SIF." The second model is a SIF that will address a single priority issue area in multiple geographic locations. This model is referred to as an "issue-based SIF." The Corporation will assess whether the application properly proposes goals and objectives as either a geographically-based or an issue-based SIF.

i. **Geographically-Based SIF**

The application must provide 1) statistics on the needs related to the issue area(s) within the specific local geographic area, and 2) information on the specific measurable outcomes related to those issue areas that the applicant will seek to improve.

ii. **Issue-Based SIF**

The application must provide 1) statistics on the needs related to the issue area within the geographic areas likely to be served, including statistics demonstrating that those geographic areas have a high need in the priority issue area, and 2) information on the specific measurable outcomes related to the priority issue area that the applicant will seek to improve.

B. USE OF EVIDENCE

i. *Applicants must include in their application information describing their track record of using rigorous evidence, data, and evaluation tools to:*

- *Select and invest in subgrantees;*
- *Support and monitor the replication and expansion of subgrantees; and*
- *Achieve measurable outcomes.*

D. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

i. **Subgranting**

- #### a.
- Applicants must describe the process by which they will competitively select their nonprofit community organization subgrantees, and, if applicable, the process by which they have pre-selected some subgrantees. Specifically, applicants must describe how their competitive subgrant selection process will ensure a portfolio of subgrantees that are innovative nonprofit community organizations serving low-income communities and that possess:*

- *A commitment to and track record of using data and evaluation for performance and program improvement;*
- *Evidence of effectiveness, including a demonstrated track record of achieving specific measurable outcomes related to the measurable outcomes for the intermediary;*
- *Strong potential for replication or expansion;*
- *A well-defined plan for achieving specific measurable outcomes connected to the measurable outcomes for the intermediary, evaluation of program effectiveness, performance improvement, and replication or expansion; and*

ii. **Technical Assistance and Support**

- a. *Applicants must include in their application information describing how they will provide technical assistance and support (other than financial support) that will increase the ability of subgrantees to achieve their measurable outcomes, including replication or expansion. Replication or expansion may happen in various ways (including, for example, creating new sites or affiliating with another program to replicate an intervention) and in multiple contexts (including, for example, serving more people in a current geography or growing to new geographies).*

Provide a panel assessment of the application's PROGRAM DESIGN as follows:

- **Write a brief Narrative Assessment;**
- **List the Significant Strengths and Weaknesses (annotate your comments by referencing the applicable Eligibility or Application Review Criteria); and**
- **Select a Rating for this section.**

Panel Narrative Assessment

The applicant provides a strong base of data to document the need and states the clear and measurable goal of creating jobs for 2,500 people in California. The applicant bases its proposed programs on a solid combination of external research from comparable programs, rigorous data collection from its own past efforts, and a well-established methodology for calculating Social Return on Investment (SROI). The applicant describes a long and consistent track record of using data in its program selection and improvement, and of strengthening the capacity of its grantees to collect and analyze outcome data in order to improve their own performance. The applicant presents sound evidence that its proposed efforts are likely to result in the desired impact, based on a thirteen-year history of assisting in the creation of 40 social enterprises that successfully created employment for 5,000 people. The evaluation process described does not track outcomes beyond job retention for one year and does not use a comparison group, however, the strengths of the program design outweigh the weaknesses.

Significant Strengths

(+) Applicant provides clear evidence of the regional need for job creation and placement, and the program objectives and design are tightly tied to meeting the specific documented needs. (Program Design A.ii.)

(+) The program describes a single coherent initiative that follows directly from the applicants experience and expertise over more than a decade and is therefore highly likely to be successfully implemented. (Program Design B.)

(+) There is strong evidence that the applicant has used evaluation data and evidence based decision-making to select and to improve program performance over many years, including pioneering the development of web-based systems that permit grantees to track and improve their own outcomes, and the creation of SROI measures for the field. (Program Design B.)

(+) Applicant's proposed selection process is extremely rigorous, including a widely-distributed web-based RFQ, pre-proposal technical assistance for all potential applicants, an extensive due diligence process for qualified candidates, and most unusual, a two month trial portfolio during which the applicant makes a small grant and works closely with the grantee to ensure that their organizational and financial systems are sound and that they are willing to measure outcomes and adjust their practices based on evidence. Only after passing this trial phase is a full grant awarded. This evidence-based process suggests an extremely high likelihood of selecting grantees who perform well. (Program Design D.1.a)

(+) The program employs an extremely strong combination of evaluation approaches. Specifically, the proposal combines real-time data collection and performance monitoring with RCT-based research conducted by Mathematica and MDRC, convening of nonprofits to learn from each other, and the calculation of SROI which documents the economic benefit of the program. (Program Design D.ii.)

(+) The use of SROI enables applicant (and SIF) to calculate an easily understood quantifiable economic benefit that would result from the SIF grant. (Program Design D.ii.)

(+) At the end of five years, the applicant proposes to create a thorough written report documenting the program's impact and spelling out evidence-based replication strategies to scale up the program. (Program Design D.ii.)

Significant Weaknesses

(-) It is unclear whether proposed evaluation techniques represent a rigorous evaluation of broader impact, rather than more routine tracking of employment outcomes. Applicant states they are prepared to work with CNCS on an evaluation for the SROI measure, but no concrete plans are specified. (Program Design D.ii.)

(-) It is unclear what outcomes will be measured beyond the creation of employment and retention for one year. Longer term job retention is important for the program to achieve its goal of reducing unemployment among target populations. In addition, the ancillary benefits of employment in terms of health, housing, family stability and other issues may not be fully captured, thereby understating the program's overall impact. (Program Design A.ii.)

(-) The applicant has not conducted RCTs of its own past programs, nor does it propose to do so for the proposed programs using SIF funds. Although the reviewers are satisfied that the mixed model of evaluation methodologies offers strong evidence of impact, including references to RCTs conducted on similar programs, we note that this omission may leave the program susceptible to criticism from other evaluators. (Program Design D.ii.)

(-) There is a substantial gap of two orders of magnitude between the size of the documented need, stated in the hundreds of thousands of unemployed youth and parolees in the region, and the proposed impact of the program in creating only 2,500 jobs over five years. The proposed program impact is quite limited. (Program Design A.ii.)

Select a Rating for PROGRAM DESIGN (double-click in the applicable box and select "checked")

☐ Excellent

☒ Strong

☐ Satisfactory

☐ Weak/Non-responsive

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY (35%)

The Social Innovation Fund NOFA states that the following will be considered when reviewing an applicant's Organizational Capacity.

A. ABILITY TO PROVIDE PROGRAM OVERSIGHT

In evaluating your organization's ability to provide program oversight, the Corporation will consider:

- i. *The extent to which your organization has a sound structure including:*
 - *The ability to provide sound programmatic oversight, including:*
 - *Experience with and capacity for evaluation; and*
 - *Experience with and capacity for supporting replication or expansion.*
 - *A well-designed plan and systems for organizational (as opposed to subgrantee) self-assessment and continuous improvement*
- ii. *Whether your organization has a sound record of accomplishment, including the extent to which you:*
 - *Have a track record of supporting organizations that demonstrate evidence of impact;*

Provide a panel assessment of the application's ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY as follows:

- Write a brief Narrative Assessment;
 - List the Significant Strengths and Weaknesses (annotate your comments by referencing the applicable Eligibility or Application Review Criteria); and
 - Select a Rating for this section.
-

Panel Narrative Assessment

The applicant describes a long history of working closely with its grantees to strengthen their capacity to gather, analyze and act on data in order to document and improve their impact. The applicant's web-based tool and SROI analysis provides a rigorous and timely impact tracking tool. The applicant has shown a consistent history of evidence-based grantee selection, self-assessment and evaluation over the past decade, as well as experience in expanding and replicating its programs. However, the applicant has not tracked program participants for more than two years, has had difficulty tracking a significant percentage of graduates after they leave the program and has not used a comparison group to test the impact of its programs.

Significant Strengths

- (+) Applicant has an established history of working with dozens of social enterprises and administering a significant amount of money over thirteen years. Based on a variety of evaluation techniques, including pre- and post-program interviews, a ten-year longitudinal study, SROI calculations, and web-based data tracking systems utilized by grantees, the applicant has shown significant program impact, including increased employment rates and an average wage increase of 31% among the more than 3,300 employees hired by REDF-funded social enterprises. (Organizational Capacity A.i.)
- (+) Proposed on-site and web-based outcome tracking system and the SROI tool have already been tested and used by the applicant for several years. (Organizational Capacity A.i.)
- (+) Applicant documents strong experience in evaluating commercial ventures of nonprofits similar to the social enterprises that would be funded by the SIF program. (Organizational Capacity A.i.)
- (+) Applicant proposes to use an expert review panel that includes academic and professional evaluators and experienced professionals from leading foundations. (Organizational Capacity A.i.)
- (+) Applicant has conducted a ten-year retrospective evaluation of its impact with BTW Consultants and drawn lessons from randomized control trials of similar programs. As a result of these evaluations, applicant modified its selection process and technical assistance, and established a new program to assist grantees in improving the effectiveness of their job placement programs. (Organizational Capacity A.i.)
- (+) Applicant has prior experience working to help its grantees expand and to replicate its programs in other regions. Applicant has experience in replicating a New York Center for Employment Opportunities in Oakland, CA. Applicant also has extensive experience in helping its grantees grow and launch new businesses. (Organizational Capacity A.i. and A.ii.)
- (+) Applicant's staff has deep experience in managing and scaling up social enterprises. Staff members have managed social enterprises with as many as 100 employees in ten states; managed venture capital funds, worked at world-class strategy consulting firms, hold MBAs from top institutions and bring highly relevant experience and educational credentials to the applicant's work. (Organizational Capacity A.i.)
- (+) Applicant employs a highly qualified Manager of Research and Evaluation and a Measurement Associate to support its data gathering efforts. The Manager has a PhD from Johns Hopkins, 15 years of relevant evaluation experience, and has held research evaluation roles at UC Berkeley and Harvard. (Organizational Capacity A.i.)

Significant Weaknesses

- (-) Limited experience in tracking participants for longer-periods of time, and in rigorous analysis of outcomes. This exposes the program to the possible criticism that its impacts are short-term or that the programs benefits are the result of self-selection among participants or other exogenous factors. (Organizational Capacity A.ii.)
- (-) Applicant's ten year evaluation by BTW Consultants is still preliminary and does not contain a comparison group. This limitation is recognized by the applicant. (Organizational Capacity A.i.)
- (-) Applicant has listed a number of organizations that have agreed to work together to support its programs, however, the specific roles and responsibilities of the different organizations are not clearly spelled out. (Organizational Capacity A.i.)

Select a Rating for ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY (double-click in the applicable box and select "checked")

Applicant Name: REDF
Application ID#: 10SI114347

☒ Excellent ☐ Strong ☐ Satisfactory ☐ Weak/Non-responsive

COST EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY (20%)

The **Social Innovation Fund NOFA** states that the following will be considered when reviewing an applicant's Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy.

A. BUDGET AND PROGRAM DESIGN

In evaluating the cost effectiveness and budget adequacy of your proposed program, the Corporation will consider:

- i. *Whether your program is cost-effective*
- ii. *Whether your budget is adequate to support your program design.*

Provide a panel assessment of the application's COST-EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY as follows:

- **Write a brief Narrative Assessment;**
- **List the Significant Strengths and Weaknesses (annotate your comments by referencing the applicable Eligibility or Application Review Criteria); and**
- **Select a Rating for this section.**

Panel Narrative Assessment

If successful, the program would create 2,500 jobs with the expectation that 70% of the jobs would be retained after one year, resulting in a net gain of 1,750 jobs at a cost of \$5.8 million, or approximately \$3,300 per job retained. Given the economic benefits of employment to the person, the region and the government, this appears to be a highly cost-effective program. The applicant's extensive past experience with identical projects suggests that the program goals can be realistically accomplished within the stated budget. However, applicant has not budgeted substantial funding for an external evaluation utilizing a control group.

Significant Strengths

(+) Evaluation would be done by the applicant with existing staff. Some additional funding is set aside for website and web apps, consultants, and others to assist the web-based tracking of employment, and the dissemination of evaluation results.

Significant Weaknesses

(-) The proposal refers to funding for the design of a larger, multi-year evaluation, but the budget does not contain funding to complete that study. Given that the budget is only for the first year, and the qualifications of the internal evaluation manager are extremely strong, this may not be a significant

Applicant Name: REDF
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omission. However, one would normally expect a funder to contract with an external evaluator at the outset and budget the significant costs of evaluation design into the first year.

Select a Rating for COST-EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY (double-click in the applicable box and select "checked")

☐ Excellent

☒ Strong

☐ Satisfactory

☐ Weak/Non-responsive

OVERALL APPRAISAL

I. Provide a 3 - 5 sentence Overall Appraisal Statement of the application taking into consideration:

The applicant describes a clear and targeted program that directly addresses the documented need. The proposal offers strong evidence that the program will accomplish its objectives, and the applicant has a long history of using evaluation data to select and improve programs. The applicant has been a pioneer in the development of performance monitoring systems and SROI. Based on the applicant's track record in funding and overseeing similar programs over the past decade, there is a strong likelihood that the program will succeed. The applicant also has a long history of building its grantees' capacity to use data to improve their own effectiveness, and the SROI measure would enable the SIF to quickly communicate the economic benefits of the program. The only weakness in the application are the limited number of jobs to be created relative to the magnitude of the need, the lack of a comparison group in past evaluation methodologies, and the omission of a budget for external evaluation design in the first year. However, the many significant strengths outweigh these weaknesses.

II. Select one Band for this application (double-click in the applicable box and select "checked")

Ensure that your selection is supported by your panel's Narrative Assessments, significant strengths and weaknesses, Ratings, and Overall Appraisal Statement. Take into consideration the weighting of each category.

☐ **Band I (Excellent):** A comprehensive and thorough application of excellent merit with very significant strengths and no/minimal significant weaknesses.

☒ **Band II (Strong):** An application that demonstrates overall competence and is worthy of support, where the value of the significant strengths outweigh the identified weaknesses.

☐ **Band III (Satisfactory):** An application with potential, where strengths and weaknesses are approximately equal. However, some fundamental weaknesses have been identified.

☐ **Band IV (Weak/Non-Responsive):** An application with very significant weaknesses and no/minimal significant strengths that have been identified. This option may also include an application that is non-responsive to the published criteria.

CONSENSUS RUBRIC

Please use this Consensus Rubric as guidance when selecting your Ratings or Bands.

Applicant Name: REDF
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BAND I (Excellent) — *A BAND I rating reflects that the application is compelling, consistently excellent in quality, and addresses all requirements; thereby showing the highest potential for success.*

The **Excellent** application consistently:

- ✓ Goes beyond what was requested, showing that the applicant has anticipated issues that may arise.
- ✓ Provides a thorough, detailed response to all of the information requested.
- ✓ Provides a clear and highly compelling description of how the proposed activities will achieve the anticipated results.
- ✓ Provides clear evidence to support all objectives of this section (no assumptions are made).
- ✓ Supports ideas and objectives with comprehensive plans explaining and connecting ideas to objectives.

BAND II (Strong) — *A BAND II rating reflects that the application is solid, good-quality, and has great potential for success.*

The **Strong** application:

- ✓ Provides a response to all of the information requested.
- ✓ Provides a realistic description of how the proposed activities will achieve the anticipated results.
- ✓ Explains most assumptions and reasons.
- ✓ Supports ideas with comprehensive plans, examples, or outlines.

BAND III (Satisfactory) — *A BAND III rating reflects that the application generally meets requirements for a reasonable chance of success, but is neither especially strong nor especially weak.*

The **Satisfactory** application:

- ✓ Covers most of the information requested, with a few exceptions.
- ✓ Is sometimes unclear how the proposed activities will achieve the anticipated results.
- ✓ Makes some assumptions and leaves some reasons unexplained.
- ✓ Supports individual ideas with plans, examples, or outline.

BAND IV (Weak/Non-responsive) — *A weak/non-responsive rating reflects that the application is below standard especially in ability, skill, or quality; indicating that this application will most likely not succeed as described or is not responsive to the application requirements.*

The **Weak/Non-responsive** application:

- ✓ Does not provide one or more key pieces of requested information.
- ✓ Gives an unclear description of how the proposed activities will achieve the anticipated results.
- ✓ Gives many unsupported assumptions and reasons with little or no connection to objectives.
- ✓ Tends to "parrot" back the question, rather than answer and explain it
- ✓ Makes many assumptions and many reasons are not defined.
- ✓ Did not connect the activities to the anticipated results.
- ✓ Does not address or respond to the requirements/conditions of the NOFA.
- ✓ Proposes activities that are not consistent with the NOFA and application instructions.